

VISION OF A SAFE SCHOOL

This section contains three (3) documents that together paint a picture of a school that not only is safe physically for students, but also is psychologically safe and fosters their healthy social, emotional, intellectual, and behavioral development.

The document entitled “Envisioning Inclusive Schools and Communities for the 21st Century” is the vision of the Iowa Board of Education for all schools in the state to be inclusive; that is, to be places that welcome and support all students regardless of their race, gender, cultural or religious backgrounds. School safety begins in schools that are safe havens for learning where everyone feels wanted and recognized for his or her unique attributes.

The second document is a self-assessment instrument for districts or schools to determine their current status in creating environments that foster students’ healthy personal-social development and develops their personal and interpersonal skills so that they will be successful in school and in life. The instrument is composed of a set of critical elements that describe the characteristics of healthy children and youth and of safe and supportive schools. These elements are based on research, a thorough review of the professional literature, and the input of state and national specialists in education, mental health, juvenile justice, child and adolescent development, and systems change. Each critical element is anchored in the literature and is accompanied by indicators of the presence of that element and the practices essential to its realization.

The final document guides district leadership teams through a process of planning that integrates the personal-social development of students into the school improvement process. This guide uses a logic model of planning and incorporates the Critical Elements throughout. Ron Mirr and Beth Larson of the Higher Plain in Coralville, Iowa originally developed the planning guide for the Iowa Collaboration for Youth Development. Ron and Beth are available, upon request, to assist districts with use of the self-assessment and planning guide.